

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, the House of Representatives considered and passed H.R. 803, "Supporting Knowledge and Investing in Lifelong Skills (SKILLS) Act". The SKILLS Act reauthorizes the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, the primary federal program that supports job training programs across the country.

The SKILLS Act eliminates or consolidates 35 separate programs, such as the Veterans Workforce Investment Program and YouthBuild, and creates a block grant. Congressman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (D-VA), a senior Member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, opposed the bill.

"The block grant freezes funding for six years, thereby subjecting funding in the block grant to erosion over time due to inflation," said Rep. Scott. "The bill also eliminates the targeted nature of the workforce training system, so those who need the training most and are the most expensive to train, may end up being the last served. Several of those targeted populations who are no longer priorities under the bill include high school dropouts, long-term unemployed, the homeless and veterans. Further, the change in composition of the Workforce Investment Boards will marginalize many of the groups that traditionally advocate for those vulnerable populations."

"Americans deserve a job training system that works," continued Rep. Scott. "Slashing programs and freezing funding, as this bill does, will not get us closer to the goal of full employment across the United States and it will not help us remain competitive in the global economy. As our economy continues to recover from the recession, it is more important than ever that we make targeted and robust investments in our nation's training and job assistance system."

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